

## Josef Raul Rodriguez

### Biography

Josef was born to Raul & Wilhelmina Rodriguez on April 16, 1986 at the University of California San Francisco Hospital.

At an early age, he had exhibited signs of advanced thinking for his age through his participation in the singing of church hymns and recitation by heart of numerous rhymes. At 2 years, he knew the songs from Disney movies, hummed the music and said the lines of the characters. He knew the alphabet at 4 and in kindergarten, at 5, he read books at a higher level and comprehended and retained facts rapidly.

Being a South Plainfield resident, he studied kindergarten at Sacred Heart School and finished grade school at John E. Riley Elementary. He graduated from South Plainfield Middle School and is currently a junior at South Plainfield High School.

School days for Josef are filled with varied interesting activities that merit awards and recognition both in the academic as well as extra-curricular areas. When he finished elementary school, he received the Presidential Award for Educational Excellence in recognition of his outstanding academic achievement. Likewise, in the Middle School, he graduated with an Outstanding Academic Achievement Award, Awards of Excellence in Algebra, Music, French and Drama. He was then recommended by the school for placement in the High School Honors Program.

Josef's outstanding gifts and talents have been shown not only in the academic field, but in the community as well. At 8 he took on being the cantor at Sacred Heart Church in South Plainfield and has been entertaining different groups with his singing.

He is involved in the National French Honor Society, the South Plainfield Marching Tigers Band, Orchestra, Chorus, South Plainfield Summer Drama Workshop, New Jersey All-State Opera Festival, and the Little Opera Company of New Jersey, the New Jersey Intergenerational Orchestra and Christian Churches.

Josef has appeared in several stage dramas as the hero Buzz Saw in "The Paper Bag Bandit," Chic in "Kokonut High," Horace Vandergelder in "Hello, Dolly," Mr. Macafee in "Bye, Bye Birdie," Smokey in "Damn Yankees," Reverend Moore in "Footloose," and Elisha Whitney in "Anything Goes."

Josef plays the cello in many programs and events when the South Plainfield Tigers Marching Band and Concert Band, where he plays the Mellophone and French Horn, do not take up his schedule. This he attributes to his piano teacher Sister Mary Maher of Mount St. Mary Academy in Watchung who started giving him piano lessons when he was 8.

The Middlesex County Guidance Department recognized his contributions and achievements at a Caring Award Dinner on April 10, 2003.

Voice lessons with Thomas Smargiassi, an alumnus of the Manhattan School of Music, has been a contributory factor to his earning the Governor's Award for Arts in Opera Education as top male vocalist, and the Mariana Paunova Ensemble Award when he performed a duet with his peer during the New Jersey All-State Opera Festival.

Josef's repertoire history includes "Una Furtiva Lagrima" by Donizetti, "O Mimi, tu piu non torni" by Puccini, "Miserere" by Verdi, "Che gelida manina" by Puccini, "Stabat Mater" by Rossini, "The Drinking Song" by Verdi, and "Ave Maria" by Bach/Gounod.

Upon graduation from ~~in~~ high school in 2004, Josef plans to join the Legionaries of Christ in Connecticut where he hopes that as a priest he can give back to God his talents by composing hymns and sacred songs.